

A HOLY AND HORRIBLE STENCH

partial fan translation of
THE SACRED AND TERRIBLE AIR
by ROBERT KURVITZ

WARNING: The following is not a top quality translation. The official version will be better. Interpretation could go in many directions, this is just the one I chose. Sentence structure is mostly left intentionally awkward to keep closer to the original Estonian, as I had only ill-advised ideas and no editor to stop me. - Your translator and fellow fan: Toivo

“Our heart is restless until it rests in you.”
St. Augustine

1.CHARLOTTEJÄL

This vacation area just outside of Vaasa swallowed four Lund girls. Along with their little bones and tan-lined hides vanished an entire era. Six kilometers of winding coastline, a swimming spot popular in the fifties; rows of changing cabins, reeds rustling in the wind. Go find there the age that conservatives weep for. When parents could send children to the beach unsupervised, two real ice-cream and bus money pocketed in summer pants. Fathers-mothers worryingly shaking their heads, keeping their children hidden from news from Messina, from Graad, from Gottwald, where - as they surmised - were weekly found cast into the warm-wall someone's wee skeletons. Every week there escaped from being kept in a cellar for thirty years onto the street someone's daughter and called for help.

But not here.

Here is social democracy. And social democracy's soft peach blossoms, gentle social programs, these progressive things make a broken human soul feel better. To this periphery never reaches the uncanny technical urge to construct a subterranean secret room. With a ventilation system where the air ducts on the front lawn are disguised as clay miniature windmills. These dark raging fevers of the mind, they simmer down in the cool mist of the periphery; the breath of distant blue glaciers, it freezes those sick thoughts residing in the head of a man. Vaasa. You would rather live there.

And then, one Tuesday morning, when in the blue sky there are white clouds, go four sisters - Maj (4), Anni-Elin (12), Målin (13) and Charlotte Lund (14) - together to the beach for a swim. They take with them two real in cash, four sets of swimming clothes, something to eat and drink and two large picnic blankets in two beach bags. At 9.30 they board the horsecar in Lovisa, a suburb of Vaasa. The tram driver remembers them well. Today, twenty years later it is the highlight of the day for the retirement-home-dwelling Roland, when he gets to speak of it: “The oldest bought the tickets for all of them. To Charlottesjäl. Forty cents. Ten cents a ticket. Were it even one stop

further it would have been twenty cents a ticket. I remember it very well. The rural lines start there, with the rates twice as high. But Lord, a girl as pretty as a picture! With such good manners as well! The oldest, Char-lot-ta!" rumbles the old man rhythmically. "That I didn't know yet, read it later in the paper. And then I went straight to the Police, without delay, every second counted."

At 10.25 the girls disembark at Charlottesjäl beach. They all successively thank the tram driver, cultivated, as they are. The beach is hot in the morning and the people are few.

Next to meet the girls is the ice-cream seller Agnetha. Agnetha is twenty years ago still an university student and works in the ice-cream shop as a summer job. Målin and Anni-Elin buy four ices: two vanilla, on lime and one with chocolate. The other girls are not visible from the shop. The windows have roller blinds against the sun, the only uncovered window is next to the counter, with a commercial display. The workday clientele is sparse, young Agnetha knows the girls and their established taste preferences. Peppermint, Målin's favourite, is out of stock that day and so arises some confusion. In addition to the ice cream the girls unconventionally buy three oil-fried meat pirogis. This raises the bill to one réal and fifty cents. The girls leave the shop and from the unblinded window next to the counter Agnetha notices in their company a Man. Anything else about the Man Agnetha is incapable of remembering. Age, height, clothifng, if there were more than one of the Men - or as Agnetha started feeling later - if there even was some Man?

This is the last time when someone sees the girls.

The four daughters of education minister - sworn in two days earlier - Ann-Margret and paper industrialist Karl Lund vanish. The press starts a years-long love affair with covering the case. Every smallest detail is brought out in the newspaper columns and so the Lund girls are carried deep into the memory of the nation. The disappearance case itself becomes one of the most prestigious unsolved cases over the Reál Belt.

At about 12.40, five hours and twenty minutes before six o'clock, when the girls are expected home in Lovisa, and about thirty minutes before the ice-cream shop, sit three boys in a living room. The room is gold-striped from the sun blinds, the boys are classmates to two of the sisters. The tall freckled one has the telephone receiver to his ear. "Hey, call already, whatever," urges the blond one.

"This way it won't leave a very chic impression, if I call some three hours before agreed upon."

The fat Iilmaraan immigrant pulls thereon the tall one by his sleeve : "For real, Tereesz, call. Something is wrong."

"I know, I know," says Tereesz and the steel rotary dial rings under his finger.

There approaches the terrible noise of time, the most violent sound in the world. From the windows does not spill into the golden room not light, but super-deep-grey. All distances there are insurmountable, between each one and other object there is *horror vacui*.

[The word super-deep-grey or „ülisüvahall“ in the book seems to be a neologism penned by Kurvitz or one specific writer friend of his. It seems obvious that it describes the nebulous, unsettling concept we have all come to love and fear: The Pale. Research showed that this color also seems to have a strong connotation of not-givin-a-shit. Or nihilism, which is allegedly one of the themes of the book. - Translator's notes.]

2. CLASS REUNION

Inayat Khan pours himself Mors. A bit of the pink liquid drips from jaw to cravat. The suit fits badly and the buttons pull. Giving the impression as if he were an idiot.

"Fat fool with a light-blue cravat," he thinks. "Shouldn't have come."

"Go anyway, you'll see your friends! Who did you have there? That von Fersen, he was a nice boy and..."

"He wasn't my friend, he was a psycho-terrorist, I despised him, nasty upstart."

"... he has grown into a very respected man..."

"... into a careerist he's grown, disgusting guy, and a racist as well. Oh I remember, what he called me, want me to tell you, mother, what he called me?"

"... and Tereesz and Jesper! Listen, Jesper is known as well now..."

"Camel shit. Mother, he called me camel shit."

Khan looks, how the the magnetic tape slides against the tape head. Plastic wheels spin hypnotically in the machine, magnet becomes music, a slow song, and for a moment he feels, as if on the assembly hall walls and floor were sneaking again those spots of light. Akin to stars in the sky or a swarm of jellyfish deep under the water. Spots sliding on Målin Lund's white gown, his hand on the girls waistline becoming sweaty. What to say? Time stands still, the music disappears and on Khan's thick-framed diamaterial spectacles reflect Målin Lund's dark-green eyes.

Håll mig här...

"Aa..." Some woman, probably from another class in their grade, comes to a stop beside the man. She starts to say something, but then acts as if she was reaching for a snack instead. Neither of them came. Khan is alone. The pantsuit wearing woman is in a pantsuit. Can't just stand around, will have to manage somehow.

He pulls from a pocket the magic pen. There under the glass smiles the People's Republic of Samara presidium chairman Sapurmat Knežinski his mighty historically black-and-white smile, right into the camera. [*the ž is pronounced as a [3] – T.*] To the left of him leans on the taffrail a rat-faced man in a black secret police leather coat. "See, take a look, the disappearing commissar!" says Khan and turns the ballpoint pen. The rat-faced man under the glass vanishes. Only the chair of the presidium Sapurmat Knežinski himself, with the proficiently capable presenter of remarkably embarrassing criticism, the grovel Uhotomski, stays on the deck. There, where before was the commissar, is now empty railing. Visible is even that part of the bridge, that the commissar used to obscure.

"Very interesting," says the pantsuited woman and looks seekingly over the shoulder. Khan adjusts the hair stuck to his forehead. In his other hand he still holds the ballpoint, that he now by himself remains looking at with a dreamy smile, mumbling to himself: "There is a commissar, there is no commissar."

The smile flickers for a moment and then disappears from the man's double-chinned countenance. Khans large sad eyes observe the commotion of grown up people on the assembly hall parquet. The class of '56 calls out each-others names there. Handshakes are exchanged, pictures of children between wallets are shown.

Commissar is, commissar is not.

In a spacious room on the parquet sits a man in his thirties. The parquet is freshly lacquered, blonde bangs fall on the forehead of the interior designer. He sits legs crossed, thin white hands in his lap. When the man looks up, reflects the interior design of the room back at him from the floor to ceiling windows. Behind him in the gloom appear the minimal skeletons of designer furniture, a kitchenette with a stone countertop and analogue system speakers as two mute obelisks. A lone spirit hangs over the room. On the coatrack hangs a beige Perseus Black peacoat and in the shoe rack are three-thousand-reál chamois leather shoes.

His hand is on the dimmer switch, light fades. The room's reflection vanishes and outside behind the floor-to-ceiling window starts a sea of ferns. The dark-green expanse fades into the dark under the spruces. Usually he sits here and listens to music, but tonight it is so quiet, that it is audible, how the rain rustles on the ferns.

Jesper de la Guardie did in his twenties, when he developed with his sympathizers the

world-famous *Illdad minimal* design language, also a lot of nose candy. Then they circuited together between the Architects' Association café and the reputable interior design office bathrooms, congratulating themselves for inventing the future and sipping bottled water to top it off: "This project, that we are doing, it *rules*, through this language of these shapes we are determining the visual cognition of Man for the next century" and "One day I will write about this a *book!* Tasteless people are wicked people, evil is tasteless. Is it then really so unthinkable, that simple and clean interior design changes the world into a better place?"

Then nose candy fell out of fashion, but bottled water stayed. Jesper takes a sip and stands up, adjusts the knot on his tie in the V-neck collar of his sweater, picks up the phone handle and calls himself a taxi.

The concrete cube under the spruces extinguishes, when the machine with Jesper whirrs into the dark grove. In the yard remains a fuel-fume puff. Inside the empty house between the glass walls rings a phone - a white apparatus on a wooden table-cube with an extraordinarily beautiful grain pattern.

It is dark.

International Liaison Police agent Tereesz Machejek steps in the magnezestation [*sic*] off the enormous slat of the train. The successively thickening rain makes glisten the carriages' steel monoliths. There they tower, above the platform suspended under the sky by a tangle of cables. From below the carriages, from the current-hot magnets rises steam, drifting in puffs on the platform's asphalt. Machejek takes from the conductor his luggage and moves with the crowd into the station building.

A coin drops into the metal slit of the payphone. The tone calls and the Liaison agent practices against the speaking tube how to normally and relaxedly say "hi." The freckles on his cheeks and glabella have with time completely vanished, mouth-scratch perpetually anxious. No-one answers, the man takes from his briefcase the address with directions and decides in favour of the tram.

The magnezestation's dark shape towers over the city. Glowing elevator cars descend from its belly down to Vaasa as though dandelion-umbrellas. In one of them looks agent Machejek, how the Nordic countries' only metropolis shimmers under his feet. The elevator window is soaked from the rain, yonder in the North Sea the low, level city breaks apart into a wide archipelago of light. Telefunken's slender mast alone arises from the saturnine-green mass of buildings. Motorways meander there, smouldering golden, traffic on the motorways as smooth as slumber. There is Königsalm - commercial centre - and directly beneath lies Salem, the colourful lights of the immigrant district flow on the asphalt. [*This scene might be the one depicted in a piece titled "Magneesivaksal" in Aleksander Rostov's deviantart gallery – T.*] Horse cars appear from beneath the riding hall awning, toiling up slopes and disappear clip-clopping beneath glossy-green chestnut trees. The rails dissipate between the tens and hundreds of parks of Lovisa, leading to the university islands and social housing districts, where the city quietly gives way to coniferous forests. Afar in the suburbs the lights go out and Machejek feels the vacation areas, empty beaches and pine forests in the rain shivering. There starts the real Katla and over their* black woodland expanses, clear cut areas and valleys approaches from the other side of the winter orbit already at the end of September a great cold. [**Singular, ungendered pronoun in original Estonian. - T.*]

Chestnut leaves drift under the riding hall building awning into the waiting pavilion, where a kitten-voiced girl announces from the loudspeaker route numbers and delays. The frame of the building echoes back at him, leaves stick onto the glass of the pavilion and the windows of the horse cars, air full of the smell of their decay.

The International Liaison Police agent steps into the crammed wagon, suitcase in hand. On the case the contours of the isolas of the Reál Belt form a bird of prey taking flight - the coat of arms of the International Liaison Police.

"Private detective," lies Khan. He is not a private detective. The private detective is a

fantastical amalgam. It borrows the obesity and oily hair from his own career in his parents basement as a collector of disappearance memorabilia and mixes into it the profession of his more successful classmate, Tereesz Machejek, in the Missing Persons department of the International Liaison Police. The fantastical amalgam has faithfully served Khan on several occasions. This is not one of those times.

"Excuse me, I didn't quite hear?" The pantsuited woman is distraught.

"Private detective. More specifically - I look for missing persons. When police and power structures have given up, then friends of family, mostly family, come to me. And then I... I will do my best." In the background Sven von Fersen gifts to the erstwhile home room teacher his collection of witty articles on management, all the while wearing such a cosmopolitan visage. You would never guess, that people with yellowish skin and exotic names are in his vocabulary camel shits.

"Ah-ah..." she turns towards Khan. "So you are still searching after them. Still"

"Yes, OK, it was that way, in the beginning. True. But I've studied it too and... one thing lead to another." The man with the light-blue cravat sweats. He is starting to lose patience. "And besides - so what, listen! Half the conversations here are about that topic. Tell me now, that you don't care."

"Firstly, half the conversations here are not about *this* topic. You think they are, but they aren't. And secondly, of course I'm interested, but in my opinion the whole thing is, well, sad."

"What's sad?"

"This topic. These people, who keep grinding it. Still writing to the paper, that they saw somewhere some woman and it appeared as what Målin or Anni would now and so on."

"A' go fuck yourself!"

The people in the immediate vicinity of the buffet table fall silent and look toward Khan and von Fersen. The pantsuited woman is now uncomfortable. She looks elsewhere. The sweating man with diamaterial spectacles thrusts the second half of the pretzel into his cheek and sets off to the wardrobe.

The chestnuts in front of the high school sway in the wind. Leaves flying on to the stairs of the main entrance, the pavement and the mud puddles. The water surface ripples, a blast from beneath the wheels of a stopping machine breaks the cones of street lighting. There sounds the closing of a taxi door and then steps in to the puddle a three-thousand-reál pair of chamois leather shoes. Cursing, the interior designer strides three long steps. Indignantly given up on the mud splatter, he puts the folder under his arm and strolls up the stairs to the main entrance.

Inside it is warm, smelling of glue. Jesper goes through the foyer, the indoor-footwear-worn parquet creaking under the shoes. He takes from the smiling volunteer a name tag and puts it into his back pocket.

"Put it on your chest, that's what they're for, so that everyone would recognize everybody."

"Yes," says Jesper. And leaves the tag in the pocket.

On the sign board are yearbook portraits and class pictures in a row. VIII B. The skinny blond boy has a head too big for his shoulders and hair licked behind the ear. Left of him is an overweight Iilmaraan immigrants' child with a dreadful cravat. Little Khan gazes with a nebulous look past the camera. The tall freckled kojko in the back "bean pole" row suggested to take off his glasses. So he would look less lame.

Creak by creak moves the man's gaze on the rows of VIII B, anxiety rising in his heart. Already his imagination precedes him. somewhere from the middle of the row of girls shines out a massive nuclear fusion reaction cluster, a distant constellation, wedding of matter.

It was eight years ago, when Jesper's sharp visage first appeared on the glossy cover of the monthly design magazine. True though, that the limelight had to be shared with two additional coked-to-the-eyes visionaries. There they were, the three of them at the shoot, on their flasghip-sofa. The softbox diffused, Fakkengaff played and beneath was written "pioneers", "future", "decorous" and much more, which he all very well remembers. Two hours later sat Jesper alone in

his glowing cube, braid rubber band [*“patsikumm,” found no good translation for this word – T.*] in his palm, on a morbidly-sized pile of class photos and newspaper clippings. A glance to the wind-swinging fir trees and the temptation to once again look, if the smell has gone, was vanquished. The braid rubber band was sorted into the compartment “domestic waste” and the folder about the girls into packages. Jesper stood in the middle of the room and breathed out deeply. Enough of this. This is now over with.

But where are they? Why are they not here? Why neither of them are not? Disappointed Jesper already makes a turned-away step back to the board, to properly embark upon the task, to look over all of the pictures, when suddenly stops mid-foyer a thirty-four year old man. That man still lives with his mother.

Early spring, twenty years prior.

Little Inayat Khan falls sideways into an ice-coated mud puddle. The sweater with reindeers is dirty, nose drips dark red blood. Amidst numerous discouragements and distressed recommendations to stay on the ground rises the boy nevertheless up. Slowly, momentarily slipping down again. Finally he stands eye to eye with Sven von fersen, merely a few meters away. Dirt dries on little Khans face, hands rising into an incorrect fighting stance. Fists shaking from hate and humiliation.

“Hey, know, what he said ey?” Von Fersen starts up again.

The foul little lackey does know, what Khan said, but asks anyway: “Do tell, what did he say, Sven?”

Sven is not stingy in answering: “He accompanied Målin home and kissed her. You understand, Kaan accompanied, Kaan kissed!” [*While Kaan is a mispronunciation of Khan, it is also the Estonian word for “leech.” You also need to palatalise the “n” in kaan – T.*]

Laughter dins and the lackey concurs immediately: “Why do you have to spout this sick story, say? This is your own mistake! If you spin such a wretched yarn, then this fault lies with you. What you think, that Målin is terribly pleased to hear such an ill tale? Eh? Is she?” [*Less eloquent in the original Estonian – T.*]

Tears of hate pull lines on the reindeer-sweatered boy's cheeks. Yesterday after school let Khan his fantasy fly. It was a terrible mistake. The sun emerges from behind a cloud and already sees a few tens of meters away from the circle of spectators, how Målin Lund's blond hair glow there as a glorious halo. The girl blushes from shame. Charlotte, the eldest of the sisters, puts a hand on Målin's shoulders and together they in their spring coats turn their backs.

“Shouldn’t you have some, I don’t know, *camels* on that sweater or what?”

A scream flashes in the manner of a curved sword through the school yard. Khan starts a desperate dash in von Fersen's direction. Although he slips a little, still in his minds eye he sees yet, how Amistad's heroic epic's Ramout Karzai's sharp spear into the enemy's chest plunges.

Distance wanes, the beastly collision seems unavoidable. But suddenly, from the corner of his hate-narrowed vision appears some unknown factor and stops him, the other arm as a stop sign against von Fersen's puffed chest.

With his arms outstretched Jesper, blonde lock of hair in front of his face, spits out his gum and emits a barrage of “*Pohhui*, Sven, don’t fuck around” arguments. Khan tries to disengage from the grasp of his desk mate, the bruised cheek and bloody nose stain Jesper's shoulder.

Thus they stand. The bell rings and lunch break ends. The yard pours itself empty of children and Jesper wipes his sweater shoulder with a napkin: “So did you kiss Målin or what?”

“No. But I did accompany her home. And it went well. Very well.”

“Just not *that* well.”

“Yes.”

“It’s the same shirt! Say, Khan, that it's not still the same shirt!”

“Jesper!”

Two grown people stand in the coatroom and shake hands for the first time in years.

There is in Jesper's wavering smile a gram of warmheartedness. He starts: "I might have acted a bit impolitely, when we last saw. I understand now - it was a mistake."

Khan just laughs on it. His few-days-old beard quakes along with his friendly double chin.

"I left a lame impression." That said Jesper thinks for a moment, about what he had in mind next: "I have *news*. Something new." He points to the folder and looks inquisitively at Khan: "Or have you, I don't know, become a chef in the mean time?"

"You know, I am always *hardcore*."

Without the slightest indication to the class reunion takes Khan his jacket from the coatroom and they head to the door.

"Look, disappearing commissar!"

"Is not very vapid."

"I made Tereesz one too. That's a particularly special version. Same picture, but guess what happens, when you turn it a little further?"

"What happens then?"

"Uhotomski disappears too! And a dove. They're halfway behind Uhotomski."

"Or else there would be half a dove hanging in the air."

"Precisely."

From agent Machejek's umbrella fall water droplets, a puff of smoke hovers in its canopy and vanishes then into the wind. "Astra" between his teeth, the man folds together the map and sticks it in his briefcase. Before him unfolds the high school lawn, from there run two men through a silvery curtain of rain, directly towards him. The grey fish-pattern coat clad kojko takes a step back. He makes room under the umbrella, it is enormous. International Liaison Police standard issue.

"You apologized?"

"He apologized," answers Khan in Jesper's stead.

"Is it... *cool* there?" Machejek points towards the school with his head.

Khan shakes his head and Jesper specifies: "Lets rather go to the city. There's a new place. A new place."

Three men step out of focus under a large umbrella. The volley of distant sleigh bells approaches gradually as the silver curtains behind the friends are pulled together...

Eight years ago.

... until the Stereo 8 format tape clicks against the magnetic reader, needles under little lamps hit twelve decibels. The beat is unbearably smooth, more modern than nose candy. Or you never know, it is hard to say. The beat comes from right here, from Vaasa's world-famous recording studios. The beat was made by some half-mythical person, who could be an Oranjese immigrant, disc jockey and music producer, but is rather a group of people or a machine in the sky. The nose candy however came on a pirate cruiser through the unmapped Pale. The nose candy was made by the machete-holding revolution-dreaming slave and the overseer, who guards the fields with a carbine. Fakkengaff made the beat so that girls would start dancing and that for boys it would be good to watch. The slave with the machete made the nose candy so that *La Puta Madre* would not send their family in front of the firing squad. For six months ripened the nose candy on the Irmala high mountain plateau, in the rays of the golden sun. The sun was held from raining down from the turquoise-blue sky by the worldeagle on their thousand-kilometer wings. That part, where the beat for half a minute as though under water submerges and then anew - as unbelievable, as it might be! - returns even cooler, was whispered into Fakkengaff's ear by the soul of debauchery. They had the white wings of an angel, but the breath against the ear of the disc jockey was hot with passion, smelling of cinnamon and primal evil. Dear Lord, how pleasant the numbness in my nose. Dear Lord, how good is that part, where the beat emerges from underwater. So sad. Even cooler than before. How cool am I?! I am there on the cover, I am so cool there on the cover. I am a pillar of

light, vertical, and around me is a dark room. And that is it, there is no more, understand?

The guests on Jesper's white divan-cube and behind the multi-functional desk-module share impressions on the worlds fair. Even champagne socialism glasses are clinked together. Jesper alone flails dancing as if a rare albino cock. [Rooster. T.] From the water bottle in his right hand fly out pearlescent drops onto the windows.

As if time, that has already been and then gone, slide Vaasa's streets behind the taxi's side window. A large black horse snorts, breath steaming from nostrils. Something sweet seeps into the Liaison Police agent's pulverized heart. The rain relents and young people in the dark slowly contract their umbrellas. Metro entrances, familiar place names. A girl on a bicycle turns into a by-street, where yellow illuminated signs steam from the wetness. The traffic reflects from the windows of houses, closed shops, until the motorway rises above the footpaths. The passing city flashes from between the stone barrier and a little boy in the window of a passing machine waves to Machejek.

On the Königsalm bridge the passing street lighting turns into a dotted line. Over the water towers a grey silhouette of a reputable residential area, Tereesz's home was there as well, when he still as a child in Vaasa lived. Afore the windshield of the motor carriage begins the island district, which twenty years ago still wore a shady reputation. As Jesper now explains, careful development and some breakthrough galleries have made Östermalm the next "trend district."

"Bourgeois-bohemia, you mean?"

Taximeter ticks, in the cabin it is dark and warm. Jesper does not even acknowledge Tereesz's wit.

"Hey, talk then," turns Khan the city development and class reunion multi-topical conversation into an unexpected direction.

"I need a projector. There's also a tape, in the "Kino" I'll talk."

"But then show the rubber."

"Yes, it's getting morbid, Jesper, show the rubber, show the *braid* rubber band," joins Tereesz in with the begging.

"Ah, come on, don't start. I don't carry it with me, I threw it away. That was altogether some kind of very strange time..."

Onto Khans face appears a clever smile: "Jesper, don't be a dog in the manger!"

"Yes, don't be a dog in the manger, show it to the class too." [There's a single, concise non-dog word for that doggy phrase in Estonian. – T.]

Jesper looks out of the side window: "No."

A quiet moment passes. Murmur of wheels on road, the blinker clicks. Khan and Tereesz look grinning at each other and Jesper with a feigned indifference out the window. Only after a while he feels on his shoulders the duty to resume conversation.

"What did you tell Fersen then? Detective story?"

"The rubber, Jesper, the rubber! Show!"

Resigned sticks the interior designer a hand into the bosom of the Perseus Black peacoat and brings forth from there a ring box.

Only recently it was so good to be and now it is so sad. Talking with the young real estate developer's wife under the window about funk!aesthetics and futurism there was such a feeling, that now it will always be this way, the *usual* will never come back again. Yet now tells the voice of the kitten from the speaker monoliths ten thousand times in a row, that they [*singular*] are in love, in love, in love... Behind the window the morning-grey, cold and dank, descends above the ferns through the darkness. That kind of feeling as before does not come at all any more. That it were about Jesper. Just some singer in a studio somewhere. Should probably do some weed. Just did and it didn't get better at all. Don't know, should probably do some anyway.

A minute of time later stands in the middle of the room in milk-grey light the recently-Major-League-entered twenty-six year old version of Jesper de la Guardie. He has his coffee-

coloured dress shirt unbuttoned, nostrils erubescant and maw angrily piped.

"So. Party's over. Let's go home."

No one hears, Fakkengaff is too loud. Stereo 8 format magnetic tape player STOP-button under his finger, stands the pillar of light suddenly in the middle of silence. Heads turn.

"Party's over. Go back home, scum."

The embarrassed egressing, seeking of garments and purses are accompanied by Jesper's glassy eyes and his mouth, that has sank into a monstrosly disdainful arch. The shoulder pat of a co-visionary dredges up from a bottomless depth at them such a glare, that spoils interpersonal relationships for eternity.

The young real estate developer's photographer wife falls behind the group a bit and turns then back to under the concrete roof of the cube. "Ankle bracelet!" she deceives.

Long strap-shoed feet, silver chain around the ankle, frame this next somber scene. In the kitchen corner between scattered assorted waste bags sits Jesper. From between apple cores, empty water bottles and handmade pasta paper bags he looks into the real estate developer's wife's kind face. The September beach fogged by wave spray behind his eyes communicates, that Jesper is not interested. Your compassion - no, thank you. Reeds rustle in the wind, under the bleak white sky stand changing cabin silhouettes in a line. Four girls runs over the sands and vanishes into thin air.

In his right hand holds the interior designer a light pink braid rubber band.

Khan raises his eye to Jesper, ring box palmed under his nose. His brow-tufts are furrowed, he is concerned. A jolt goes through the cabin, when the machine stops. The taxi driver sticks their head from the driver's seat into the cabin, but turns away quickly, seeing the expression on the faces of the group.

"The smell has gone," says Khan.

"I know."

"Something is very wrong about that."

"I know."

3. NON-ENTITY

The Romangorod convention distinguishes ten different types of disappeared people. Ninth of which, the non-entity, is in crass conflict with the international declaration of human rights. Such a person is not only removed by some country's body of violence, lost is also the documentation about their onetime existence. This special case of political disappearance, the damnation of memory, has with mixed success been wrought upon many historical figures. In the case of the Mesque state for example there can be statistically posed as much as a ten percent loss out of the historical scale of this culture. On successful cases we will not dwell any longer - it would be impossible to talk about a day, that did not come to be. But small marks stay behind from us all and the censor too is human.

So it can be, that the citizen erased is thanks to their non-entity-ness a significantly more recognized historical figure, than their colleague who merely got a bullet to the head behind the waste facility. What other outstanding narrative could have saved Samaran Communist Party cutthroat Julius Kuznitski from the obscurity of history, if not that funny photo. With the development of imaging technology, the handicraft of filing off the head of a former emperor from coins has been joined by even more complex processes. For a well-oiled degenerated-bureaucratic workers' republic it is not much of a challenge to conduct some spring cleaning in its punch cards. But in the photo- and in some especially curious case the film-footage-era the cleaning work

acquires a certain shade of technical subtlety. One such as we may admire in the already aforementioned case of the disappearing commissar Julius Kuznitski, who was by the magic wand of the retoucher on that foggy Sunday morning from the deck of the steamboat "Mazov" made to vanish.

Julius was a disgusting human being, an uneducated yokel. The world revolution his young eyes did not see - the commissar's finest hour began later, in Samara. Without possessing even the slightest understanding of Mazov's idea, he did not regard it as gratuitous to deal out to victims titles with a politically accusatory connotation. This is what eventually sealed his fate. Evidently presidium chairman Sapurmat Knežinski could one day simply not tolerate this embarrassment. "Tell me, Kusnja, how could it be, that comrade Zdorov is a counter-revolutionary, if the revolution already happened fifty years ago? and why is comrade Bronski's mazovian-knežinskian beliefs "irrevocably narrow-minded"? I am Knežinski, Sapurmat Knežinski, that name is m i n e!"

In a certain circle these two pictures have - the original and the retouched side by side - outright become a pop-cultural phenomenon. The curiosity is given further spiritual value by way of that vile rat-grin, which Kuznitski that day onto his countenance conjured. I mean look at him! Who would not wish to wipe this wretched weasel from the annals of history?

Far sadder is the story of the third figure right there on that fateful photograph. Aram Uhotomski, Mazov's true revolutionary friend from the Eleven Day government, exceptionally talented agronomist, geneticist, one of the three breeders of the Ulan Yellow potato variety. [*This must be a reference to the Estonian potato variety "Jõgeva Kollane" (Jõgeva Yellow) from 1942. A legendary, but now largely discontinued type. Described as velvety in flavor and "...meeting the taste of the working people..." It proved susceptible to viral infection and was too delicate for industrial farming implements to facilitate large-scale farming. – T.*] An extraordinarily apolitical figure [*The real guy, Julius Aamisepp, was not that apolitical. – T.*], and whose unpretentious behavior and irreplaceable contribution to the dining table of the working class of the whole world saved him from wholly three purges. All this, until Uhotomski's scientific impartiality hurt someone's feelings during the XXI geneticist's plenum. Turns out, that modern genetics is simply not at all compatible with the knežinskian *tabula rasa* philosophy, where when in a revolutionarily spirited condition can even gooseberry seeds be persuaded into figs.

With horror Uhotomski found himself speaking before the presidium granting himself the title of small plasticine worm. Not having written self-directed critique before, the poor intellectual overdid it so garishly, that even in the climate of lush self-abashment of the time it was hard for the attendees to listen to his words. From that memorable performance on Uhotomski's name connotes precisely with the epithet of groveling. With the historical character completely compromised, the merciful chairman Knežinski decided to spare the memory of the older and once so much more dignified comrade, sent him during the Nine process behind the waste facility and later had all traces of Uhotomski's existence removed. But the falsification of history failed, the retouchers in their absentmindedness left unprocessed one remarkable photo, on which Uhotomski still was. The same, from which commissar Julius Kuznitski earlier into oblivion stepped.

Technically the most impressive is however Ignus Nilsen's – Mazov's schoolteacher and prophet – tale of falling from canon. Also an otherwise noteworthy figure in the history of the communist movement, he became under the hand of Vaasan censors outright a disembodied spirit. For the image of the social-democratic Nordic country Mazov's apocalyptic butcher character suddenly became somehow burdensome. So they along with the newly revolution repelling Graad forged the disappearance of Nilsen. To the frustration of the censors there was during the technologically progressive Eleven day government filmed tens of hours of footage of Mazov, where the revolutionary icon was accompanied nearly always by his best friend and ally, Nilsen. The destruction of the entirety of the footage would have roused suspicion. So it came to pass, that at Mazov's right hand floats perpetually a ghostly gray cytoplasm. It took historians decades to solve this eerie mystery.

Even today many believe, that the cytoplasm constitutes Communism itself.

4. VIDKUN HIRD

Twelve-millimetre film buzzes inside the projector. On the divan beside the screen fabric sits Khan next to Machejek and looks incredulously at his square coffee cup atop the square saucer. [...]

More generally on the project as a whole:

I embarked on this endeavour because I saw people in the community longing to read more things in the world of Elysium and impatiently waiting for an official translation. I had the book, the time, the lived-in post-soviet multilingual context and some of the education necessary just lying around. So why not make something that could cheer someone up a little? Even if the prose might be stylistically way off because these days I read mostly long-winded epic fantasy.

***This project does not currently intend to completely translate the book.** I have only translated 17 pages in half a year with 206 to go. It would take, at this rate, several years to finish this excretion masquerading as a translation. I am certain that ZA/UM will complete their official version, which I too am eagerly awaiting, long before that estimate. Perhaps even a screen adaptation! But I will never finish this, especially if ZA/UM expresses any amount of disapproval for these ramblings. If I am not asked to stop, if there is even mild interest, I might manage some more.*

If you feel the need to offer any feedback, I would be happy to receive it. @IneptHope on Twitter perhaps.

Translator's corner:

The Estonian language simply does not have gendered pronouns. Just pronouns for things and people. Every instance of he/she has been deduced from context, because in the original text the pronouns did not specify gender, but just sentience. If animals, abstractions or personifications (such as “the Sun” or the soul of a country) are attributed sentience through the use of a pronoun, I have just used the singular “they” pronoun. When Estonian children learn English or other “sexist” languages in school, the number one mistake they make, and often for years into the learning process, is incorrect pronoun usage^[citation needed]: we just weren’t brought up obsessing over gender quite that much, not in every sentence. Though gendered language does creep in through other ways.

There was too much effort spent researching different types of pirogis, coats, shoes or other barely relevant props. Researching hair-bands, scrunchies, braid rubber bands and other ponytail-or-braid-shape preservatives was much more vital, but in the end still left us with the lack of an exact 1-to-1 connotational counterpart.

Looking up proper punctuation was omitted, alliteration infrequently indulged in.

Toivo